

# BRIEFINGS

The latest news and updates from the Mid-Atlantic MIRECC



## Director's Update



Rita Davison will be retiring from the Mid-Atlantic MIRECC and Department of Veterans Affairs at the end of June, after more than 15 years of dedicated service to the MIRECC and the Veterans whom we serve. An essential member of the MIRECC research team almost since its inception, Rita has been integral to ensuring that our signature Post-Deployment Mental Health (PDMH) and PDMH-Longitudinal (PDMH-L) studies have been implemented to the highest standards.

Well respected by her MIRECC peers and research investigators, Rita provided scrupulously ethical and competent operation of our studies. In addition, her warmth, kindness, and patience have been frequently noted by the Veterans she has worked with as well as her colleagues. Rita has had a huge positive impact on MIRECC research to improve the mental health of our Nation's Veterans, and we wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize all our MIRECC staff who have contributed to data collection efforts of the PDMH and PDMH-L studies. Our clinical coordinators work diligently to recruit and maintain strong rapport with research participants and to date have spent more than 25,000 hours working directly with study participants to amass our extraordinarily rich datasets. These datasets have contributed substantially to the success of the MIRECC and in improving Veteran care. We recognize the immeasurable value that our coordinators have made and continue to make to the MIRECC on a daily basis and want to say we see you, we value you, we thank you.

*John A. Fairbank, PhD.*  
 Director, Mid-Atlantic (VISN 6) MIRECC



Mid-Atlantic MIRECC colleagues congratulate Rita Davison on her retirement from the MIRECC and Department of Veterans Affairs. Left, first row: Sarah Martindale, PhD; Jennifer Naylor, PhD; Rita Davison, PhD; Mary Pender, PhD. Left, back row: Jeff Hoerle, MS; Jared Rowland, PhD; John Fairbank, PhD.



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**CONTACTS**

### MIRECC LEADERSHIP

- John Fairbank, PhD**  
 Director  
[john.fairbank2@va.gov](mailto:john.fairbank2@va.gov)
- Jennifer Naylor, PhD**  
 Deputy Director  
[jennifer.naylor2@va.gov](mailto:jennifer.naylor2@va.gov)
- Robin A. Hurley, MD**  
 Associate Director-Education  
[robin.hurley@va.gov](mailto:robin.hurley@va.gov)
- Wilfredo López-Ojeda, MS, PhD**  
 Assistant Director-Education  
[wilfredo.lopez-ojeda@va.gov](mailto:wilfredo.lopez-ojeda@va.gov)
- Nathan Kimbrel, PhD**  
 Co-Associate Director-Clinical  
[nathan.kimbrel@va.gov](mailto:nathan.kimbrel@va.gov)
- Cindy Swinkels, PhD**  
 Co-Associate Director-Clinical  
[cindy.swinkels@va.gov](mailto:cindy.swinkels@va.gov)
- Jean C. Beckham, PhD**  
 Co-Associate Director-Research  
[jean.beckham@va.gov](mailto:jean.beckham@va.gov)
- Christine Marx, MD**  
 Co-Associate Director-Research  
[christine.marx@va.gov](mailto:christine.marx@va.gov)

# FOCUS ON THE VISN

**BREAKING NEWS**

★ **Torran Claiborne**, Richmond MIRECC's Research Coordinator, was selected Mental Health Service's "Non-Clinical Employee of The Month" for May. His co-workers unanimously agreed that research coordinators require excellent leadership skills and are a valuable part of the clinical team, helping everyone stay on task. Torrand demonstrates all these skills and abilities on a daily basis.

★ **Wilfredo López-Ojeda, MS, PhD** was invited to attend to the *2022 Annual TolTech Users Meeting* at the University of Colorado, Medical Sciences Campus (June 1st -3rd). Toltech's Annual Users Meeting gathered an elite group of medical educators, instructional designers, leaders and other medical scholars from US, International Universities and Medical Schools to discuss innovating use cases for leveraging and integrating imaging technologies, such as 3D Imaging Anatomy, Extended Reality (XR) and Virtual Reality (VR) in medical education (MedEd), clinical training and MedEd research.



## Honors & Awards



★ **Rajendra Morey, MD** was awarded an R01 grant from the National Institute of Mental Health that will fund research on Neurobiologically-based subtyping of multi-cohort samples with MDD and PTSD symptoms. His research will identify brain network disruptions in PTSD and MDD as well as identify new previously unrecognized subtypes of MDD and PTSD, helping to advance research for new treatments. Dr. Morey is affiliated with Duke University Medical Center and the Durham VA Medical Center. Congratulations Dr. Morey.

★ **Stephanie Wells, PhD** is the principal investigator in a study entitled "Adapting Treatment Delivery to Improve Retention in Evidence-based PTSD Treatment." This is an HSR&D Career Development Award grant with full funding for the period beginning 10/1/22 to 9/31/27. The project will provide preliminary data and a pilot trial comparing massed evidence-based PTSD psychotherapy to typical once weekly evidence-based PTSD psychotherapy. Dr. Wells is a member of the VISN-6 MIRECC. Assisting her with her research will be two other members of the VISN-6 MIRECC who will serve as mentors. They are Eric Dedert and Pat Calhoun.



Additionally, Dr. Wells is the Principal Investigator of a multi-site NIH funded trial through NICCH. The trial is entitled "Multi-site Feasibility of Compassion Meditation for Veterans with PTSD Protocol".

★ **Wilfredo López-Ojeda, MS, PhD**, received an award from the "Salisbury Foundation for Research and Education" (SFRE) to support a small group of Wake Forest's medical students (MS2), currently engaged in a Summer research project developing original Neuroanatomy contents for the newly established Salisbury and Durham Extended Reality (XR) platforms. These innovative contents will be utilized for further developments of clinically-oriented XR immersive modules.



## ON THE SPOT

★ **Dr. Nieuwsma's et al.**, Integrative Mental Health Publication entitled: "[Patterns of potential moral injury in post-9/11 combat veterans and COVID-19 healthcare workers.](#)" captures national media attention ([CBS](#), [NBC](#), [Telemundo](#), [US News](#) and [others](#)).

## EDUCATION AND DISSEMINATION

### Invited Lectures & Presentations

**Nieuwsma JA.** (May 4, 2022). *Moral injury: From combat veterans to COVID-19 healthcare workers.* Invited presentation delivered for the Department of Veterans Affairs Chiefs of Staff National Call (virtual).

**Nieuwsma JA, Rentie C, Barnett T.** (May 25, 2022). *Patterns of potential moral injury reported by post-9/11 combat veterans and healthcare workers during COVID-19: Implications for military, VA, and hospital chaplains.* Invited presentation delivered for the Soul Repair Center Webinar Series, Chaplaincy Innovation Lab (virtual).

**Smigelsky M.** (April 18, 2022). *Chaplaincy and mental health care.* Invited discussion presented at the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education Behavioral Health Community of Practice Quarterly Call (virtual).

**Smigelsky M.** (May 26, 2022). *Moral injury: Assessment and application in the context of evidence-based treatment delivery.* Presented at the Durham VA Trauma Recovery Program Staff Retreat, Durham, NC.

**Smigelsky M, & Nieuwsma, J.** (March 14, 2022). *Mental health/Chaplain-led moral injury groups.* Presented at the Let's Talk Implementation Science meeting, Durham Center of Innovation to Accelerate Discovery and Practice Transformation Durham, NC (virtual).

**Wells SY.** (March 11, 2022). Guest lecture for UNC social work class. *PTSD Treatment Research: Science and Practice.*

Wortmann JH. Principles and Practices of ACT for Chaplaincy. Hour-long training for Chaplain Service staff, VA Palo Alto Healthcare System (virtual).

**Wells SY.** (April 18, 2022). Guest lecture for University of San Diego for a counseling course: *Evidence-based Treatment for PTSD.*

### Poster Presentations

**Etzel L, Miskey HM, Webb JB, Demakis GJ, Harris**

**HL, Shura RD.** (June 2022). *Executive functioning does not moderate the combat exposure-PTSD relationship.*

Poster presented at the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology 20th Annual Conference,

Minneapolis, MN.

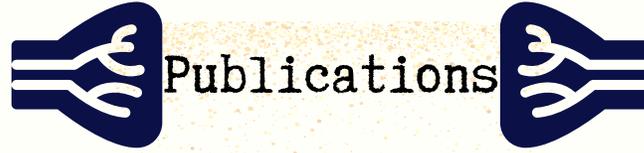
**Magnante AT, Shura RD.** (June 2022). *Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Substance Use, and Impulsivity in Veterans.* Poster presented at the

American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology 20th Annual Conference, Minneapolis, MN.

### Conference Participation/Research Presentations

**Nieuwsma JA, O'Brien E, Xu H, Smigelsky M, Meador KG.** (June 5, 2022). *Patterns of potential moral injury in post-9/11 combat veterans and COVID-19 healthcare workers.* In E. Apaydin, Chair. Health workers safety, burnout, and wellbeing. Symposium presented at the Academy Health Annual Research Meeting, Washington, DC.

**Shura RD.** (April 2022). *Symptom and performance validity: Recent updates and research with Veterans.* CE workshop for the West Virginia Psychological Association Spring Conference.



### Book Chapter

Gutner, C. A., & Wells, S. Y. Implementation Science: Developing a common understanding for use in mental health. In G. Asmundson (Ed.), *Comprehensive Clinical Psychology*, 2nd Edition. Elsevier Ltd. (In Press).

### Scientific Articles:

- Bjork JM, Keyser-Marcus L., Vassileva J, Ramey T, Houghton DC, Moeller FG. (2022). Attentional function and inhibitory control in different substance use disorders. *Psychiatry Research* May 1; 313 114591. [doi: 10.1016/j.psychres.2022.114591](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2022.114591).
- Bjork JM, Shull ER, Perrin PB, Shura RD. (2022). Suicidal Ideation and clinician-rated suicide risk in veterans referred for ADHD evaluation at a VA medical center. *Psychological Services*. Advance online publication. [Learn more](#) (This is a previously cited article, now including all the authors.)
- Blakey SM, Griffin SC, Grove JL, Peter SC, Levi RD, Calhoun PS, Elbogen EB, Beckham JC, Pugh MJ, Kimbrell NA. (2022). Comparing psychological functioning, suicide risk, and non-suicidal self-injury between veterans with probable posttraumatic stress disorder and alcohol use disorder. *Journal of Affective Disorders*. (In Press).
- Blalock DV, Berlin SA, Young JR, Blakey SM, Calhoun PS, Dedert EA. (2022). Effects of Alcohol Reduction Interventions on Blood Pressure. *Current hypertension reports*, 24(4), 75–85. PMID: PMC9044471. [Learn more](#)
- Bountress K, Brick L, Sheerin C, Grotzinger A, Bustamante D, Hawn S, Gillespie N, Kirkpatrick RM, Kranzier H, Morey RA, Edenberg H, Maihofer A, Disner S, Ashley-Koch A, Peterson R, Lori A, Stein D, Kimbrel N, Nievergelt C, Andreassen O, Luyckx J, Javanbakht A, Youssef NA, The PCG PTSD Working Group, and Amstadter A. (2022). Alcohol use and alcohol use disorder differ in their genetic relationships with PTSD: A genomic structural equation modelling approach. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. (In Press).
- Buck B, Gagen EC, Halverson TF, Nagendra A, Ludwig KA, Fortney JC. (2022). A systematic search and critical review of studies evaluating psychometric properties of patient-reported outcome measures for schizophrenia. *Journal of psychiatric research*, 147, 13–23. [Learn more](#)
- Ekhtiari H, Zare-Bidoky M, Sangchooli A, Janes AC, Kaufman MJ, Oliver JA, Prisciandaro JJ, Wustenberg T, Anton RF, Bach P, Baldacchino A, Beck A, Bjork JM, et.al. (2022). A methodological checklist for fMRI drug cue reactivity studies: development and expert consensus. *Nature Protocols*. 17(3): 567-595. [doi: 10.1038/s41596-021-00649-4](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41596-021-00649-4)
- Griffin SC, Young JR, Naylor JC, Allen KD, Beckham JC, Calhoun PS. (2022). Reciprocal effects between depressive symptoms and pain in veterans over 50 years of age and older. *Pain Medicine* (Malden, MA). 23(2):295-304. [Learn more](#)
- Gromatsky M, Patel TA, Wilson SM, Mann AJ, Aho N, Carpenter VL, Calhoun PS, Beckham JC, Goodman M, Kimbrel NA. (2022). Qualitative analysis of participant experiences during an ecological momentary assessment study of nonsuicidal self-injury among veterans. *Psychiatry Research*, 310, 114437. [Learn more](#)
- Halverson TF, Browne J, Thomas SM, Palenski P, Vilardaga R. (2022). An examination of neurocognition and theory of mind as predictors of engagement with a tailored digital therapeutic in persons with serious mental illness. *Schizophrenia research. Cognition*, 28, 100236. [Learn more](#)
- Halverson TF, Patel TA, Mann A, Evans MK, Gratz KL, Beckham JC, Calhoun PS, Kimbrel, NA. (2022). The Screen for Nonsuicidal Self-Injury: Development and initial validation among veterans with psychiatric disorders. *Suicide & Life-threatening Behavior*, 10.1111/sltb.12847. Advance online publication. [Learn more](#)
- Halverson TF, Pinkham AE., Harvey PD, Penn DL. (2022). Brief battery of the Social Cognition Psychometric Evaluation study (BB-SCOPE): Development and validation in schizophrenia spectrum disorders. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 150, 307–316. Advance online publication. [Learn more](#)
- Ivanov I, Bjork JM, Newcorn J. (2022). Sensitization-based risk for substance abuse in vulnerable individuals with ADHD: Review and re-examination of evidence. *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews* Apr;135:104575. [doi: 10.1016/j.neubiorev.2022.104575](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2022.104575)
- Ma L, Cunningham K, Anastasio N, Steinberg JL, Bjork JM, Taylor B, Arias AJ, Riley B, Snyder A, Moeller FG. (2022). A Serotonergic Biobehavioral Signature Differentiates Cocaine Use Disorder Participants Administered Mirtazapine. *Translational Psychiatry* May 6;12(1):187. [doi: 10.1038/s41398-022-01934](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41398-022-01934)
- López-Ojeda W., Hurley R. (2022). Kisspeptin in the Limbic System: New Insights Into its Neuromodulatory Roles. *Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*. (In Press).
- Murphy JL, Cordova MJ, Dedert EA. (2022). Cognitive behavioral therapy for chronic pain in veterans: Evidence for clinical effectiveness in a model program. *Psychological services*, 19(1), 95–102. [Learn more](#)
- Nieuwsma JA, Smigelsky, MA, & Grossoehme DH. (2022). Introduction to the special issue “Moral injury care: Practices and collaboration.” *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, 28, S3-S8.
- Nieuwsma JA, Smigelsky MA, Grossoehme DH, Meador KG. (Eds.) (2022). Moral injury care: Practices and collaboration [Special issue]. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, 28 (S1).
- Rakesh G, Clausen AN, Buckley MN, Clarke-Rubright E, Fairbank JA, Wagner HR, VA Mid-Atlantic MIRECC Workgroup, Morey RA. (2022). The role of trauma, social support, and demography on veteran resilience. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 13:1, 2058267, [doi: 10.1080/20008198.2022.2058267](https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2022.2058267)
- Shepherd-Banigan M, Wells S, Falkovic M, Ackland P, Swinkles C, Dedert E, Ruffin R, Houtven C, Calhoun P, Edelman D, Weidenbacher H, Shapiro A, Glynn S. (2022). Adapting a family-involved intervention to increase initiation and completion of evidence-based psychotherapy for posttraumatic stress disorder. *SSM-Mental Health*. [Learn more](#)
- Smigelsky MA, Trimm V, Meador K, Jackson GL, Wortmann JH., Nieuwsma JA. (2022). Core components of moral injury groups co-facilitated by mental health providers and chaplains. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*. (In Press).
- Varela JL, Ord AS, Phillips JI, Shura RD, Sautter SW. (2022). Preliminary evidence for digit span performance validity indicators within the Neurocycological Assessment Battery. *Applied Neuropsychology: Adult*. Advance online publication. [doi: 10.1080/23279095.2022.2076602](https://doi.org/10.1080/23279095.2022.2076602)
- Welch KG, Stiles BJ, Palsson OS, Meyer-Kalos PS, Perkins DO, Halverson TF, Penn DL. (2022). The use of diary methods to evaluate daily experiences in first-episode psychosis. *Psychiatry research*, 312, 114548. Advance online publication. [Learn more](#)
- Wortmann JH, Nieuwsma JA, King HA, Fernandez P, Jackson GL, Smigelsky MA, Cantrell W, & Meador KG. (2022). Collaborative spiritual care for moral injury in the Veterans Affairs Healthcare System (VA): Results from a survey of VA chaplaincy. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, 28, S9-S24.



# RESOURCES FOR VETERANS & FAMILIES

Visit [Self-help resources](#) to obtain education and support information for Veterans, friends and family members who may be facing mental health challenges. VA specialists have assembled a short list of reviewer's recommended materials that may be helpful in finding the most appropriate information for you. We have a new education pamphlet on Moral Injury (MI), click [here](#). Please click on each resource topic for more information.

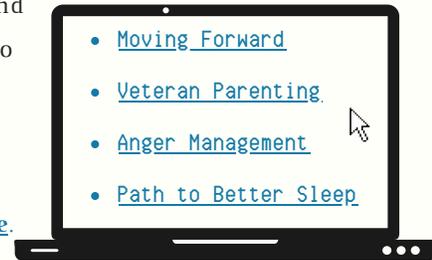
- [General Mental Health](#)
- [Depression & Anxiety](#)
- [PTSD](#)
- [Substance Use Disorder \(SUD\)](#)



For additional help, click "[How to Use.](#)"



There are several free and anonymous on-line education and life coaching programs that use interactive exercises and video demonstrations to teach skills for overcoming life challenges. For more information, click [here](#).



## DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

The DMVA Resource Guide is produced and published by the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to assist and educate Veterans in learning about state and federal veteran benefits. View or Download by clicking [here](#).



## PROVIDER EDUCATION

### UPCOMING WEBINARS FOR NATIONAL CBCO MENTAL HEALTH GRAND ROUNDS

#### Infertility and Mental Health

Presented by: Laura J. Miller, MD

Dates: Wednesday, July 13, 2022, 8:00 - 9:00 am CT and

Thursday, July 14, 2022, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm CT (repeat)

Click [here](#) to register

Check the website for previous webinars in this series available for credit in TMS.

For direct links to upcoming webinars, click [here](#).



### VA HSR&D Cyberseminars

#### MIRECC PRESENTS WEBINAR:

The 2021-2022 schedule for MIRECC Presents has concluded. MIRECC

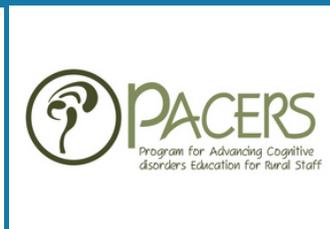
Presents will reconvene in October for the 2022-2023 schedule.

Register through [VA EES TMS](#) then attend LIVE at

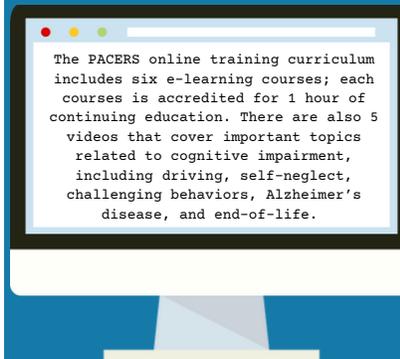
<http://va-eerc-ees.adobeconnect.com/mireccpresents/>

Access the MIRECC Presents webinar series calendar for upcoming events online at

<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/vsn20/Education/webinars-mirecc-presents.asp>



PACERS is an education program for health care staff who care for Veterans with cognitive disorders and their caregivers. While this program targets rural health care staff, providers working in any setting can benefit from this information.



The PACERS online training curriculum includes six e-learning courses; each course is accredited for 1 hour of continuing education. There are also 5 videos that cover important topics related to cognitive impairment, including driving, self-neglect, challenging behaviors, Alzheimer's disease, and end-of-life.

**VA Providers:** Take courses using TMS links

**Non-VA Providers:** Use TRAIN links

**Course 1:** Driving and Dementia-Hanging up the Keys.

**Course 2:** How to Deliver the Diagnosis of Alzheimer's

Disease. **Course 3:** How to Have an End of Life

Discussion.

**Course 4:** How to Identify Self-Neglect.

**Course 5:** Addressing Decision-Making and Safety in

Dementia.

[VISIT PACERS](#) for links to each course.



## RESEARCH SITES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

### DURHAM VAMC

MARY C. PENDER  
MARY.PENDER@VA.GOV  
919-384-8582 EXT 134005

### RICHMOND VAMC

TORRAN CLAIBORNE  
TORRAN.CLAIBORNE@VA.GOV  
804-675-5000 EXT 4251

### SALISBURY VAMC

MARY PEOPLES  
MARY.PEOPLES1@VA.GOV  
704-638-9000 EXT 12956

### NANCY MARTINO

MEDICAL LIBRARIAN  
NANCY.MARTINO@VA.GOV  
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## BRIEFINGS

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